

IF ASKED TO CHOOSE A SIDE, I'd consider myself anti-surgery. This is mainly due to being scared more than any overriding morals or values. I'm a realist, though, and I know that shifting fat means choosing between two options – the gym or the scalpel, and anything else is cheating.

I'd heard whispers about the new CoolSculpting treatment from Zeltiq on the beauty grapevine, and was ready to dismiss it when I discovered it had been developed by Dr Mario Luca Russo – the man who brought us the miracle of laser hair removal and the Fraxel collagen treatment. CoolSculpting works using Cryolipolysis, a process where fat cells in the treated area are cooled to the point where they crystallise, die and are flushed away in the metabolic system. The remaining fat cells then condense, leaving you with around 20 per cent less fat.

The logic is simple enough – you just isolate the area you want to freeze. But this is where it gets weird. To do that, a vacuum device is used to suck the fat upwards, away from your body, so only that area is treated.

I wasn't bothered by having my stomach measured. I didn't wince when the ice-cold gel pad was laid on my skin. But when the therapist lifted the sizeable suction device over my head (she needed both hands to do so) and it lingered above my tummy, that was when I began to question it all. Having been told the pain was 'relative, like childbirth' during my consultation, I don't think my nerves were unfounded.

The feeling was almost indescribable but I'll give it a go. As the device is clamped on, you feel immense pressure, then tightness as you struggle to catch your breath, followed by sharp pain. Then it calms down. If you can get through the first five minutes, you're there. By then, the ice pad has numbed the area and it's just a dull ache that's perfectly manageable. For me, the

Extreme Beauty

No-Knife Liposuction

Jessica Hough dreaded bikini season, but could a radical new treatment banish her belly woes?

'My stomach is much flatter and firmer than before'

next 50 minutes went by quickly but the removal wasn't pleasant. Using all her yoga-induced might, the therapist pulled hard to break the seal between the device and my skin. Visions of her being flung across the room crossed my mind. More alarming, though, was my abdomen when it was set free. It looked like a slab of raw meat: blotchy, freezing cold and numb to the touch. I was sent home with the assurance it would all be fine and that in a few

weeks, I'd see the results of my endurance. The next fortnight was uncomfortable but I could go about my normal routine without too much pain. There was, however, a feeling of prickly sunburn across

my midriff that randomly came and went but it was nothing a few painkillers didn't solve. There's no doubt in my mind, though, that the procedure has worked – my stomach is much flatter and firmer than before. And I'm told that unless I develop an avid fast-food habit, it will stay that way indefinitely, which should combat the annual bikini freak-out.

There must be some truth to the childbirth analogy, because I've already forgotten the pain and am even contemplating going back to have my arms done. Looks like there's a secret option number three for this surgery-phobe after all.

The facts

CoolSculpting by Zeltiq costs £800 per treatment area. To book, contact Dr Mario Luca Russo (at one of three London Rejuvenation Clinics), 0870 243 2230, therejuvenationclinic.co.uk.



Photograph by Scope Beauty/Juicy